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Response Paper 4 – On Kali & Krishna

David R. Kinsley’s *The Sword and the Flute* explores the origins of the Hindu gods Kali and Krishna as well as their rise to popularity. In this discourse, I will contrast the Hindu tradition’s emphasis on physical appearance (at least as presented by Kinsley in *The Sword and the Flute*) with its teachings that we should strive to transcend the trappings of the physical world to see what is beyond the surface and attain *moksha*.

In the first half of *The Sword and the Flute,* entitled “The Flute: Krishna’s Carnival of Joy”, Kinsley explores Hindu representation of Krishna, stressing his physical beauty, saying: “[an] obvious characteristic of he cowherd Krishna is his surpassing beauty. Beauty is not an attribute of Krishna alone. Many Indian gods are known for their beauty and grace” (23).

In contrast to Krishna, but in the same vein, Kinsley emphasizes Kali’s shocking, repulsive appearance throughout “The Sword: Kali, Mistress of Death”.